Internet Safety Policy for Children Looked After

1. Statement of intent

The purpose of this document is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of children who are looked after, carers, connected carers, social workers, residential workers, the virtual school and other professionals who work with Children Looked After in relation to internet safety.

Children and young people can access the internet in many different ways, using a variety of devices including desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones and games consoles. This Policy aims to provide guidance relating to the safe use of the internet by Children Looked After regardless of how and where they access it.

The internet is an integral part of our lives and children need to learn how to use it safely and effectively; ultimately they need to take responsibility for their own safety. The overarching emphasis of this Policy, therefore, is to provide guidance on how carers and all corporate parenting partners can help Children Looked After achieve this.

"Children and young people need to be empowered to keep themselves safe – this isn't just about a top-down approach. Children will be children – pushing boundaries and taking risks. At a public swimming pool we have gates, put up signs, have lifeguards and shallow ends, but we also teach children how to swim…

… just like in the offline world, no amount of effort to reduce potential risks to children will eliminate those risks completely. We cannot make the internet completely safe. Because of this, we must also build children's resilience to the material to which they may be exposed so that they have the confidence and skills to navigate these new media waters more safely".

Safer Children in a Digital World,
Report of the Byron Review Executive Summary, March 2008

2. Policy guidance

Carers should also be familiar with the [Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) procedures. The principles and guidance within these procedures should be followed by all adults whose work brings them into contact with young people.

Risk Assessment

Every child is different, each placement provides a different set of circumstances and the internet is constantly changing. For these reasons it is impossible to

provide a single set of rules to cover every aspect of internet safety for all Children Looked After.

The young person's social worker should include internet use in the risk assessment when the young person enters a new placement. This will help to determine what the acceptable level of internet use is for that individual and guide the process of setting up the Agreements outlined below.

Agreements

- **The Young Person's Acceptable Use Agreement** should be signed by the carer, the child and child's social worker at the beginning of the placement or when the young person starts to have access to the internet. All Children Looked After must sign the Agreement
- For many children the statements contained within the **Young Person's Acceptable Use Agreement** will need to be explained in appropriate terms. For this reason the agreement should **form the basis of a discussion** between the **Carer**, the **Child** and **Social Worker** and should not be signed until this discussion takes place.
- A set of **Home Internet Rules**, based on the Young Person's Acceptance and the Risk Assessment must be negotiated with the child. The rules should be relevant to the child's needs and the carer's home circumstances.
- The **Home Internet Rules** should set clear boundaries, using appropriate language, about what is expected of the child or young person while in that particular placement. These could include:

  - Time limits;
  - The type of sites or specific sites that the young person is permitted or not permitted to use;
  - Agreement to explain or show carers what they are doing online at any time;
  - Any behaviour that is unacceptable eg: bullying, gossiping;
  - If the young person accesses social networking sites, agreement to share who their online 'friends' are, ensure privacy settings are appropriately set and establish the type of activity that is acceptable;
  - The need to tell someone if inappropriate content is accessed or they are upset by anyone while online;
  - The need to ask before carrying out certain activities e.g.: setting up an account on a games site, joining a social networking site.

- It is recommended that the **Home Internet Rules** are displayed or kept near to the device that the child uses most frequently to access the internet.
- The **Home Internet Rules** should be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at regular intervals.

- Carers are also required to sign a **Statement** that they have read and agree to abide by the Internet Safety Policy.

Monitoring, supervision and encouraging safe use of the Internet

- It is recognised that children and young people can access the internet in many ways and through a variety of devices that are not always easy to monitor or supervise. For this reason carers cannot be expected to monitor and supervise all children's online activities. However they must apply this policy wherever they are able.
- Carers may choose to prevent children's internet access on a temporary basis as a sanction. However it is not usually acceptable for children to be prevented from accessing the internet permanently. Children need to learn how to use the internet safely and take responsibility for their own safety. This is best achieved by providing guidance in the home environment.
- Carers and other professionals may on occasion prevent children and young people's access to the internet in order to keep them safe. This should be done as a part of an agreed plan. This may include confiscating equipment for a temporary period.
- All carers should access relevant internet safety training and ensure that they keep themselves up to date on current internet safety issues.
- Carers' role in helping children and young people to learn how to use the internet safely is extremely important and they must ask for support and/or further training if they lack confidence in this area.
- Carers and social workers should identify and request additional training or support for children if appropriate.
- If carers have any concerns about children's online activities they should report it to the child's or their own supervising social worker.
- Computers with internet access must be located in a publicly accessible area. Children should not, in most cases, be allowed to access the internet in a bedroom or similar private area.
- Carers and social workers need to be aware that most social networking sites impose age limits on their membership. Facebook, for example, currently denies membership to anyone under 13 years old. YouTube states that their site is not intended for under 13 year olds to view and that members must be over 18 or have parental/guardian consent to add content to the site. It is therefore inappropriate for children under 13 years old to use social networking sites.
- Young people who wish to post images of themselves on websites must be made aware of the risks involved. In some cases it may not be safe for children to post images on social networking sites such as *Facebook* or *Twitter*. This must be assessed by the child's social worker on an individual basis.

- Prohibiting young people from using social networking sites at home will not necessarily prevent them from accessing them elsewhere. A more effective way of helping to keep children and young people safe when using social networking sites is to:

  - Ensure young people set their privacy settings appropriately;
  - Pay attention to what information the young person is posting; and
  - Encourage young people to share their social networking experiences with an appropriate adult.

It is expected that everyone in a position of trust who comes into contact with young people using the internet exercises a 'professional curiosity'. It is only with an appropriate application of professional curiosity can we ensure that all is done to keep children and young people safe on the internet.

3. Revision

The Policy will be reviewed periodically and any significant changes will be approved by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Part of the review process will involve obtaining the views of children and young people, carers and social workers. This will be achieved through consultation with the appropriate professionals, groups and teams and by acquiring feedback at training sessions.

Individuals who are involved in enforcing or are affected by this Policy are also invited to make suggestions for amendments. These should be forwarded to the Service Manager – Children Looked After or the Virtual School who will collate any revisions and present them to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

4. Support, training and resources

No two situations are exactly alike and inevitably scenarios will arise which are not specifically addressed here. If carers or young people have issues that arise relating to internet safety, the carer's supervising social worker or child's social worker should normally be the first point of enquiry. In addition, the Service Manager – Children Looked After and the Virtual School are able to provide advice and support.

Social workers and supervising social workers will:

- Be familiar with and promote the council's internet safety policy for Children Looked After to carers and children;
- Provide support and advice in establishing and enforcing the Acceptable Use Agreements and Home Internet Agreements within the carers' homes or residential unit;

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- Follow up and inform on issues around young people's and carers' activities on the internet;
- Keep abreast of issues around internet safety by attending appropriate training, accessing relevant resources and by consultation with the Virtual School and/or the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership;
- Encourage carers to access relevant advice and guidance and attend internet safety training;
- Encourage and support Children Looked After in using the internet safely and responsibly;
- Help looked after child to understand the importance of safe internet use.

Virtual School for Children Looked After

The Virtual School provides support and advice relating to internet safety including the promotion of the Council's Internet Safety Policy for Children Looked After to carers, children, residential childcare workers, social workers and other colleagues

Contact details:

Virtual School Head
Schools and Learning
0142239 4123
Princess Buildings

Fostering Team

Calderdale's Fostering Team provides training on internet safety. This can be accessed by foster carers but also carers within other contexts.

Fostering Team Manager
Children's Social Care
0142226 6124
Princess Buildings

The Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)

Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) is the key statutory mechanism in Calderdale through which agreements are reached on how relevant agencies will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and for ensuring that what those agencies do is effective CSCP is committed to:

- Helping all children and young people to stay safe;
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people;
- Responding when children and young people have been harmed.

With respect to safeguarding and new technologies, the Partnership is committed to engaging and empowering children and young people so that they can stay safe from harm, exploitation and abuse and from bullying the in real world and virtual world. As part of its role in preventing abuse and neglect, CSCP works with key national partners such as CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre). Locally, it works closely with other services to promote safe use of the internet across all schools, services and within the community.

Training

(a) The Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership provides internet safety training, which is available to carers and Calderdale Council staff;

(b) The Virtual School also provides additional support in the use of computers and the internet.

Resources

There are a wide range of organisations, which offer advice, support and information on internet safety issues. Below is a short list of some of these resources.

Web sites:

- **CEOP**

This is the web site of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), which delivers a multi-agency service dedicated to tackling the exploitation of children. It provides advice to parents, carers and children on Internet safety, an online reporting facility (Click CEOP) and the Thinkuknow web site (see below).

- **Thinkuknow**

These resources help young people, parents and carers and teachers to learn about the risks that young people may encounter whilst using the Internet. Developed by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) the Thinkuknow web site also includes a facility for young people to report online abuse.

- **Childnet International**

This web site provides a range of resources to help children and young people to use the internet constructively and to protect children from being exploited in the online environments provided by new technologies.

It includes comprehensive advice for young people, parents, teachers and carers about Internet and mobile safety in the form of downloadable leaflets and interactive activities.

- **[Get Safe Online](#)**

This site is the result of a joint initiative between the Government, law enforcement, leading businesses and the public sector. This site provides free independent, user-friendly advice on internet security and safety. Look in resources for parents, teachers and young people in the knowledge base for advice on internet safety.

- **[BBC](#)**

General advice on internet safety for parents, carers and children together with links to a huge range of online resources and includes interactive activities for children.

- **[Digizen](#)**

The Digizen site has been set up by Childnet International to help tackle online bullying or cyber bullying. It contains advice for young people and parents/carers on social networking and cyberbullying.

- **[Ofcom guidance on parental controls for games consoles](#)**

Type games consoles in the search box on the Ofcom web site to access a summary of parental controls features on games consoles. The page includes links to the leading games consoles manufacturers to access instructions on how to set up the controls.

Publications

- **[Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review](#)**

This review looks at the evidence on the risks to children's safety and well-being by exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the Internet and in video games.

It also aims to assess the effectiveness and adequacy of existing measures to help prevent children being exposed to such material and help parents understand and manage the risks of access to inappropriate content, and finally to make recommendations for improvements or additional action.

- **Social networking and contact**

How social workers can help adoptive families

- **Facing up to Facebook**

A survival guide for adoptive families

Both books by Eileen Fursland, Published by BAAF, 2010